

TORREY BOTANICAL CLUB REMINISCENCES

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The New York Botanical Garden

I gladly contribute reminiscences of the years immediately following my election to the Club in 1877, while I was a student in the School of Mines, with especial reference to members of the Club known to me during that period.

Dr. George Thurber was president in 1877, and for many years afterward the meetings were held at the herbarium rooms of Columbia College, at 49th Street and Madison Avenue. Dr. Thurber, long editor of the *American Agriculturist*, had a fertile fund of botanical information of all kinds and stimulated discussion on nearly every topic presented at the meetings. Mr. P. V. LeRoy, who had been an assistant of Dr. Torrey, was curator of the Torrey Herbarium and he carefully guarded the collection during his incumbency and increased it by the purchase of many valuable sets of plants.

I entered the School of Mines in 1875. Dr. Torrey died in January, 1873. While I was being prepared for the School of Mines at the Staten Island Academy, I was taken on several occasions to Columbia College by my father to see Dr. Drisler, and on one of these visits I was told where the herbarium was located and a professor was pointed out to me as the renowned Dr. Torrey. This did not make much impression on me as a boy, but later, when becoming familiar with Dr. Torrey's portrait, I recollected the incident. Mr. J. J. Crooke, then resident of Great Kills, Staten Island, an all-around naturalist who accumulated large collections, induced my parents to send me to the School of Mines, and told me much about Dr. Torrey. Mr. Crooke was Treasurer of the Club for a period.

Mr. William H. Leggett, who founded the *Bulletin* of the Club in 1870, was still its editor; he was an enthusiastic field and herbarium botanist, a highly successful teacher, and a fine linguist

who inspired all his associates. His herbarium forms the principal part of the nucleus of the Local Herbarium of the Club, which has in later years been expanded into the Local Herbarium of The New York Botanical Garden. Dr. Timothy F. Allen, a physician of prominence and a man of delightful personality, had already commenced his long-continued studies in Characeae, and was interested in obtaining specimens of these plants from all parts of the world. Mr. J. M. Wilbur, Secretary of the Club for many years, seldom missed either a field or an herbarium meeting. Dr. J. W. Barstow, resident of Flushing, was a frequent attendant at meetings and brought in many specimens. Mr. John L. Wall, an active microscopist, attended many field-meetings and subsequently was one of the founders of the New York Microscopical Society; I was closely associated with him for a period of years. Mr. William Bower, who had a garden of native plants at Newark, New Jersey, and was keen on their cultivation, rarely missed a field-meeting. Mr. W. R. Gerard, subsequently editor of the *Bulletin* and a man of great erudition, was pursuing his mycological studies. Messrs. Isaac Buchanan and James Hogg, both nurserymen, occasionally came to meetings and brought specimens of cultivated plants; Thomas Hogg, brother of James, joined the Club in 1882, after returning from Japan, whence he sent many Japanese shrubs and trees for their first introduction into the United States; he subsequently became a Vice-president of the Club and was active at its meetings; I saw a great deal of him in later years. Professor James Hyatt was already an enthusiastic microscopist, and I well remember collecting diatoms with him in marshy grounds now occupied by the systematic herbaceous plantations of The New York Botanical Garden. Mr. C. F. Austin, who resided at Closter, was in the midst of his important bryological work, but it was never my good fortune to meet him; after his death in 1880, Dr. Newberry sent me to Closter to buy his bryological collections, which thus became the nucleus of the great moss herbarium subsequently built up by Mrs. Britton at The New York Botanical Garden. Mr. M. Ruger was a regular attendant at all meetings and a diligent collector; a considerable number of his specimens are preserved in the local herbarium; one of the first field-meetings I remember was under his guidance at

Train's Meadows, Long Island, especially to collect *Scleria verticillata*, first found by him there in 1874. Dr. Denslow we still have with us; Mr. H. A. Cassebeer, Jr., will attend the dinner this evening.

Professor D. C. Eaton was vigorously pursuing his fern studies at Yale and sent communications for the *Bulletin*; I do not remember seeing him at any meeting, but I visited him at New Haven. Mr. G. W. Wright and Mr. William Chorlton, both of Staten Island, contributed much to the interest of meetings by bringing specimens of both wild and cultivated plants. Judge Addison Brown had already commenced his active participation in the affairs of the Club and his important influence on American botany by forming an herbarium, and for a number of years attended nearly every field-meeting. Mr. J. H. Redfield, of Philadelphia, made occasional contributions to the *Bulletin*; I do not think that he was ever present at a meeting which I attended, but I visited him later in Philadelphia. Professor Joseph Schrenk, almost our only plant anatomist and physiologist of those years, was at the Hoboken Academy and subsequently at the College of Pharmacy; he was a keen observer, and I recollect searching for *Schizaea* with him at Tom's River for a day without finding any, but he took in a sod of *Drosera* for experimental purposes, and shortly afterward found that he had *Schizaea* in the same sod! Mr. Cornelius Van Brunt was pursuing studies of diatoms and his collections subsequently came to the New York Botanical Garden; he was present at a number of field-meetings and helped found the New York Microscopical Society.

Professor Alphonso Wood, of the College of Pharmacy, resided at West Farms, where I once visited him with others of the Club and the party walked up the Bronx Valley through the whole length of the present New York Botanical Garden reservation, on which occasion I first saw the pot-holes, located near the west end of the present Boulder Bridge, which I described in the Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences in 1881; it was this trip that gave me my first knowledge of the natural beauties of the Bronx Valley. Professor Wood had at that time about completed his long series of noteworthy text-books. Dr. O. R. Willis, a diligent student of the local flora, resided at White Plains and at-

tended many meetings of the Club, contributing notes and specimens. Dr. L. Schoeney, a practicing physician, was in those years perhaps the most constant attendant at both field and herbarium meetings, and continued his interest over a long series of years. Dr. Arthur Hollick, who was elected in 1877, at the same time I was, is one of the few living persons who has maintained continuous membership in the Club since that time; he was active with me in the study of Staten Island plants and our collections of those years are preserved in the herbarium of the Staten Island Association of Arts and Sciences.

Dr. Newberry, then in the midst of his paleobotanical studies, occasionally came to the meetings, being elected to membership in 1878, and became President to succeed Dr. Thurber in January, 1880. He had an enormous fund of botanical information and was able to throw light on almost every topic brought up for consideration; as his assistant in the School of Mines for a series of years subsequent to 1879, it was my good fortune to be closely associated with a naturalist of his renown. Miss Elizabeth G. Knight (subsequently Mrs. Britton), elected in 1879, had already absorbed enthusiastic interest in plants and animals, through association with Dr. Newberry and with Professor Edward H. Day, of the Normal College, who was elected to the Club in 1880 and who subsequently participated in many field-meetings. Professor Day was a most jovial naturalist, a pupil of Huxley, and of very broad information. He led a field-meeting once into Monmouth County to see *Lygodium*, and perpetrated a pun in wanting to know why that tramp was like rum, which he expounded by maintaining that it was a sandy cruise (Santa Cruz)! As a popular professor of the Normal College, Professor Day is remembered with affection by a large number of students. Mr. Eugene P. Bicknell, who was elected in 1880, had already commenced his critical studies of the local flora, especially of what is now the Borough of the Bronx, and had begun the formation of his extensive herbarium; he attended herbarium meetings with much regularity and contributed frequent notes and specimens. Mr. William H. Rudkin, subsequently and for many years Treasurer of the Club, became a member in 1878, and for a long period contributed important aid to the work of the organization, attending

both field and herbarium meetings and aiding Mr. Leggett in the publication of the *Bulletin*; both Mrs. Britton and I were with Mr. and Mrs. Rudkin much during those years.

My first botanical contribution was made to the Club in September, 1877, and printed in the October *Bulletin* of that year; it is upon Rarer Plants of Staten Island, including a note on the sensitive stamens of the *Opuntia* of what is now Crooke's Point. Was this a premonition of my subsequent interest in Cactaceae?